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REFERENCES

Surrey, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011. Pp. 205. ISBN: 978 1 4094 0031 8 (hbk), 978 1 4094 3116 9 (ebk)

- 1 A greatly anticipated, highly important publication, the *Poetics of the Iconotext* introduces – albeit with considerable delay – the insightful and wonderfully elaborate work of Liliane Louvel on word/image relations to the English-speaking audience, by bringing together excerpts mainly from the author's key theoretical writings published in French – *L'œil du texte: Texte et Image dans la littérature Anglophone* (1998), and *Texte/Image: Images à lire, textes à voir* (2002), but also her articles. Indeed, this introduction is a significant contribution to the rapidly growing field of word/image interaction studies, since, as Karen Jacobs notes in her introduction to this volume, “while Louvel is among the few acknowledged authorities on text/image relations in France, and her work is widely known and respected in Europe and beyond ... it is less well-known in an Anglo-American context” (2). What is most important, however, and what Jacobs mentions only in a footnote, is that Louvel's books comprise the only written study to present a text/image typology, thus constituting a seminal work for the examination of word/image relations from a formalist approach.
- 2 The depth and breadth of Louvel's work becomes immediately apparent by the wide range of interactions presented in her analyses, spanning from the earlier representation-related myths of Medusa and Narcissus to the novels of Virginia Woolf or Henry James and J. M. Coetzee, but also by the sheer variety of verbal/visual texts she

employs, from the Homeric epics to Western painting. Within this wide spectrum, the author's work establishes not only a field of convergence for the textual and the pictorial, but also a zone for the development of a structuralist/semiotic discussion that forges connections between numerous, diverse photo-textual fusions, and between verbal/visual encounters dating from the origins of *ut pictura poesis* (that can arguably be traced to Aristotle and Horace) to contemporary critical theory in the French tradition. The abundance of examples presented and treated in the original publications in French is somewhat restricted in the English publication; as the editor notes "whereas the original French texts give theory and practice roughly equal weight, the English volume here privileges the ground-breaking theoretical segments of each and confines the examples to a pithy few" (2). Nevertheless, Louvel's style and treatment of her subject, her uniquely eloquent yet not verbose tone, engages the reader in a fascinating, encompassing journey that does not accentuate these lacks but, instead, creates anticipation and instigates a curiosity for more.

- 3 The first part of the book, entitled "Text/Image: the Infinite Dialogue," consists of two chapters where the author introduces the key concepts of this work, terms such as text, image, iconotext, representation and *ekphrasis*, from a theoretical and historical scope. Louvel embarks on her analysis stating her preference for the term *iconotext* as "it illustrates perfectly the attempt to merge text and image in a pluriform fusion, as in an oxymoron" (15) and delineates a genealogy of "icono-textual" encounters by addressing and critically assessing previous theoretical work on knowledge, iconology and representation by philosophers such as Edmund Burke and Gotthold Lessing and by theoreticians such as Ernst Gombrich, Nelson Goodman, Murray Krieger and James Heffernan. Within this context, the author reopens the discussions lying at the intersection of word and image since Antiquity –by elaborating on the concept of *ut pictura poesis*, by tracing the debate on the Sister Arts back to Da Vinci's *Paragone* and by revisiting Lessing's dichotomy between temporal and spatial arts– and provides a detailed analysis of the concepts of *ekphrasis* and *hypotyposis*.
- 4 Part II, entitled "Modes of Insertion of the Pictorial: A text/image Typology" comprises of three chapters that constitute the main body and core of this volume. Stepping on her predecessors' work on "intermedial discourse" (55), and especially Genette's *Palimpsests*, Louvel here examines the different modes of insertion of the visual element in a verbal text –either *in absentia* or *in praesentia* – and formulates her typology, working on the premise of the heterogeneity of the two components and based on what she calls "degrees of pictorial saturation." The descriptive modalities of transpictoriality, inter- and intra-pictoriality, parapictoriality and metapictoriality, as well as those of hypopictoriality, archpictoriality, and mnemopictoriality, are presented accompanied with a wide range of examples in chapter 3, to be followed, in chapters 4 and 5, by an investigation of the narrative functions of the image in the text, which are invariably dictated by the relationships of contradiction or support, enlightenment or disruption they establish with the verbal narrative. Thus, chapter 4 delineates the "nuances of the pictorial," in an attempt to "establish a graduated typological scale according to a higher or lesser degree of pictorial saturation of the text" (89). The pictorial markers established here –the painting-effect, the picturesque view, the hypotyposis, the tableau vivant, the aesthetic arrangement, and the pictorial description– are concluded with a return and expansion of the concept of *ekphrasis*. In chapter 5, accordingly, Louvel proposes two distinct schemata of interaction, the "paternal model," which consists of images

generating or triggering the creation of a written narrative, and the “maternal model” referring to instances when “the text contains but is not governed by the image” (102). What is most interesting in the author’s analysis and development of these terms, and inviting to both the expert and the layman reader alike, is the careful and meticulous method with which Louvel constructs her theories and formulations. Constantly engaged in a dialogue with the existing theories and while critically approaching the already canonized concepts of the pictorial, the author constructs her typology as a continuation of an on-going process of tackling the multifaceted interactions between word and image; she revisits definitions, points to fallacies and inconsistencies produced by the drawing of arbitrary parallels or rash comparisons of the media’s formal qualities, and always justifies and supports her theory with case studies.

- 5 In the final part of this volume, entitled “Poetics of the Iconotext” and consisting of two chapters, Louvel turns her gaze away from paintings and directs her attention to other vision-related objects, such as mirrors, photographs, maps, optical instruments or tapestries. She suggests that, albeit substitutes, these objects maintain the quality of “semiotic mediators: variations of the image returning under a different guise,” and, are therefore, invested with the potential to “open the literary text to the visual, through the ambiguous mechanisms of the referential and the imaginary” (137). Following a detailed analysis of the above-mentioned artifacts, when inserted in literary contexts, and their complex operations, the author then argues against Lessing’s spatiotemporal dichotomy and proposes its replacement with “the coexistence of the so-called “arts of simultaneity” or “arts of continuity” (171). To this end, she engages in the exploration of synaesthesia, by discussing the image of the body in texts as a “figuration of time,” by exploring the insertion of images in text in relation to rhythm, and by inviting us to consider the image as a component that endows the text with “iconorhythm,” a “visual scansion that ... opens the text to its own rhythmic effects [and] gives the text its harmonious colors” (180).
- 6 As editor Karen Jacobs states, “the value of Louvel’s work lies not only in the range of specialized tools she gives us to help us navigate such an uneven epistemological and political terrain, but also in the challenge she extends to discover these very manifestations on the literary text’s very surfaces” (10). More than that, it is a thoroughly explored, meticulously presented, truly erudite investigation of text/image interaction, which provides insightful readings and constitutes an invaluable tool to scholars engaged in this rapidly growing field. It is unfortunate that the publication of Louvel’s texts in English does not coincide with the quality of her work. Apart from the obvious problems resulting from the delayed introduction of the author to the English-speaking audience – it is characteristic that the most recent bibliographical reference included in this book dates to 2009 – this publication seems to be lacking the attention to detail, both in format and layout, worthy of a scholar of this caliber and these affinities. One should mention, if not insistently, the small font and dense page layout, which is strikingly ironic in the case of an author who so brilliantly discusses the importance of layout and the visuality of a text; also, the oft confusing placement of subheadings, which occasionally force the reader question the organization of the arguments. More importantly, instead of being presented with a clearly delineated argumentation, the reader often feels disoriented by the repetitions of meanings; although the large corpus of Louvel’s texts obviously necessitates a selection that would exclude other important formulations – for instance, her theories on the “bimedial third” – the seaming of the excerpts included in this

volume often results in a seemingly superficial mapping of the questions and issues permeating the field, which is certainly not the case with the totality of the author's work. All in all, although this publication fails to depict the magnitude of Liliane Louvel's work, it is, without a doubt, a valuable contribution to the field of word/image interaction, especially with reference to the bridging of the French and Anglo-Saxon tradition. For those who are already familiar with Louvel's writings in French, the *Poetics of the Iconotext* is first and foremost, a promise for more.

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